

NSC BRIEFING

8 March 1955

BACKGROUND - RHEE PLANS FOR UNILATERAL ACTION

I. Three recent unconfirmed reports, received by FEC counterintelligence from unidentified sources, suggest that ROK President Rhee is planning some sort of unilateral military action against North Korea, perhaps the opening of a "second front" in the event that the Chinese Communists attack Formosa.

25X1X6 A. One of these reports states that, on 14 February, Rhee told his Defense and Home ministers that he expected the North Koreans to invade the south in October of this year, that South Korea must "strike first," and that the ministers should be prepared to initiate hostilities in early April.

25X1X6 B. [REDACTED] Rhee ordered his Defense minister to prepare a statement of South Korea's military capabilities by 15 March.

25X1X60 C. [REDACTED] Rhee told an 18 February cabinet meeting that everyone should be prepared for war by 1 March. Rhee allegedly went on to say that South Korea had agreed with the Chinese Nationalists to advance north should Formosa be attacked.

II. We consider these reports, if genuine, to be examples

of Rhee's psychological warfare, his principal weapon for conducting foreign relations.

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- A. Rhee believes that Korean unification, which is his major goal, can only be achieved in the course of a full-scale US war in Asia.
- B. He has sought to exploit the Formosa crisis to keep alive the prospects of renewed hostilities in Korea.
- C. Such reports as these could be purposefully circulated in the hope of determining the US attitude towards possible ROK military action should the Formosa crisis explode into active warfare between the US and Communist China.

III. Such an agreement between the ROK and the Chinese Nationalists has been specifically denied by ROK Army Chief of Staff Chong Il-kwon, who recently completed an official visit to Taipei.

- A. Although stating that Rhee was "pleased" by press reports that Chong had pledged automatic renewal of war in Korea in the event of an attack on Formosa, the Chief of Staff denied that he had made such a statement.
- B. Both the ROK and the GRC, while sharing a common view of their best future chances in Asia, are aware of their military dependence on the US and neither has shown much enthusiasm for a military pact that did not include the US.
- C. Therefore, any ROK promise which may have been made

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to a pledge of moral support, with military action not unilaterally guaranteed, but instead made contingent upon US approval and support.

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